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AUTHOR Sauls, Samuel J.
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ABSTRACT

A national study was conducted concerning factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations as perceived by station directors. A pilot-tested mailed collection questionnaire was sent to a random sample (415) of the 1192 stations designated as noncommercial. A follow-up mailing and phone calls to nonrespondents were made during the survey period. Findings indicated that station management positions, station types, station power, and perceptions of station purposes as perceived by station directors (n=298) were significant predictors of the selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. Statistically significant differences were found between the variables and selected factors which influence the funding of such stations. Findings reinforced the contention that college radio serves as a training ground for students who plan to enter professional broadcasting and that this factor influences funding. The factor of the station's being an alternative to commercial radio is not a crucial element in influencing the funding--the concept of college radio as an alternative to commercial radio is fairly widespread. Further research should be directed toward the impressions of college and university administrators within this same subject area and student service fee allocation and budget decisions which affect funding. (Contains a figure and 20 references.) (NKA)

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Factors Which Influence the Funding of College and University Noncommercial Radio Stations

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By

Samuel J. Sauls, Ph.D.

University of North Texas

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Factors Which Influence the Funding
of College and University Noncommercial Radio Stations

Abstract

An original national study was conducted concerning factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations as perceived by station directors. The findings indicated that station management positions, station types, station power, and perceptions of station purposes as perceived by station directors (N = 1192/n = 298) were significant predictors of the selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. Statistically significant differences were found between the variables and selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. Recommendations for further research and practice are also included in the study. This paper is a general overview of the study and its findings.

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE FUNDING OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY NONCOMMERCIAL RADIO STATIONS

The growth of noncommercial educational FM radio, generally the staple of college and university radio stations, can be attributed to the Federal Communications Commission's allocation on June 27, 1945 of 20 FM channels set aside exclusively for noncommercial use (channels 201 to 220 between 88 and 92 megaHertz). The number of noncommercial educational FM licenses increased from 38 in June 1947 (Avery & Pepper, 1979, p. 22), to more than 1000 college, university, and school-owned radio stations in 1992 (Broadcasting & Cable Market Place, 1992, pp. A-431-A-432). Overall, the number of public, noncommercial, radio stations increased from 396 in 1969 to 1,076 in 1980 ("Public Broadcasting," 1981, p. 79). The rapid increase in the number of noncommercial educational FM radio stations is attributable to the recognition by colleges and universities of their potential as academic training facilities, community service outlets, and, most importantly, public relation arms for the colleges and universities.

In 1979, Lucoff lamented that, while university administrators generally have little or no broadcasting experience, they most often possess "control over funding"

of campus radio stations (p. 26). In contrast, however, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters reported that 75% of the college and university educational radio stations responding to their 1967 study had only monthly or less frequent contact with the college or university as the licensee in the operation of the station (p. I-14). It is thus "hardly surprising to find a direct connection between budget size and the quality and extent of station programming" (p. I-8).

With this intent, the authors of many research studies and numerous articles have examined the funding of college and university radio stations. Spawning this ongoing research is a general attitude which is characterized by the following statement made in 1973: "In situations where the top decision makers and budget formulators did not, for whatever reasons, understand what radio might do to further the goals of their institutions, budgets were consistently low" (Robertson & Yokom, 1973, p. 111). As recently as 1992, Thompsen reported that "the student-operated radio station is a valuable resource for broadcast education, but in many cases, it has yet to reach its full potential for preparing students to become professionals" (p. 15). Part of the limitation of educational radio stations rests in the lack of adequate funding. Yet, college and university

noncommercial radio stations annually seek funding on campuses throughout the United States.

The overall purpose of this study concerned the factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations as perceived by station directors. While previous studies concerning funding have traditionally centered around actual dollar amounts, this study investigated the variables of station management positions, station types, station power, and station purposes among radio station directors as possible significant predictors of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. Specifically, the purposes of the study were to determine if selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, as perceived by station directors, differ according to (a) station management positions; (b) station types; (c) power of broadcast stations; (d) their perceptions of radio station purposes; and (e) their perceptions of the college or university's purpose for the radio station. Also, the study set out to determine whether a correlation exists between radio station directors' perceptions of radio station purposes and their perceptions of the college or university's purpose for the radio station.

Methodology

A population of 1,192 noncommercial college and university radio stations (N = 1192) was derived from a current presorted mail list database from the National Association of College Broadcasters. Because this study concerned only college and university radio stations, the database was edited to eliminate stations licensed to high schools and school districts. Additionally, commercial stations licensed to colleges and universities were deleted from the database (Broadcasting & Cable Market Place, 1992, pp. A-431-A-432) An appropriate simple random sample size for the survey was 290.53, or 291 (n = 291). This number was derived by using the population size of 1,192, a sample size for permissible error (proportion) at 0.05, and a confidence level of 95% (McCall, 1982, p. 330). To adjust for anticipated nonresponses (underestimate), the actual sample was increased to 415 (na = 415) (290.53 divided by 0.70 = 415.04, or 415). A simple random sample was obtained using a computer-generated set of random digits.

A pilot-tested mailed collection questionnaire composed of multiple choice items and a 9-point horizontal, numerical (Likert-type) scale was employed. A follow-up mailing and telephone calls to nonrespondents were made during the survey period. Because the survey data were collected by just one person, a high degree of centralized control was

maintained. A total of 298 usable survey responses were received, yielding an overall response rate of 71.80%. The total of 325 received responses, not including repeat responses, resulted in a total response rate of 78.31%. The data were analyzed using SPSS.PC for IBM VM/CMS. Missing data were treated with no entry into the coded data. The level of significance was set at $p \leq .05$.

Findings

Within each of the variables, the selected factors were addressed utilizing the population means. These mean results by variables serve as significant predictors of selected factors which affect the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. For discussion purposes, overall mean results are presented in Figure 1. These means correspond with the following selected factors which influence the funding of noncommercial radio stations:

a. integral part of an academic program
b. public relations tool for the school
c. serves the community
d. alternative to commercial radio
e. student training facility
f. NPR affiliate
g. serves the alumni
h. student service
i. viewed by the school as an important entity
j. highly respected on campus
k. generates considerable support/underwriting

As shown in Figure 1, student training facility (mean = 6.570) was perceived by station directors as the most important factor overall in influencing the funding of

noncommercial radio stations. Service to the community (mean = 6.225) was also ranked highly important as a factor influencing the funding of noncommercial radio stations. Of note, NPR affiliate stations ranked serving the community as the most important factor overall in influencing the funding of noncommercial radio stations.

See Figure 1

Examination of the data in Figure 1 also shows that serving the alumni (mean = 2.262) was the least important factor overall in influencing the funding of noncommercial radio stations. As might be expected, NPR affiliation was also ranked extremely low in importance in influencing the funding of noncommercial radio stations. This was due to the fact that most of the respondents (81.2%) were not NPR affiliates. (A closer investigation of this variable revealed that NPR affiliates ranked NPR affiliation extremely high (mean = 7.00) in influencing the funding of noncommercial radio stations.)

An additional element concerning the selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, as perceived by station directors, is the aspect of reliability. A reliability coefficient analysis of the factors produced an Alpha score of .5040. "The reliability coefficient is also a

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coefficient of determination. Theoretically, it tells how much variance of the total variance of a measured variable is 'true' variance" (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 412). While the study survey reliability coefficient was higher than that of the pilot study, which can be attributed to an increased sample size of the actual survey, the reliability coefficient for the study survey was moderately low. It is possible that the reliability coefficient could be raised by increasing the number of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, as perceived by station directors.

Discussion

A total of 298 usable survey responses were received for an overall response rate of 71.80%. The total of 325 received responses, not including repeat responses, resulted in a total response rate of 78.31%.

The mean results by station management position, station type, station power, and station purposes as perceived by station directors which were significant predictors of selected factors that influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations were presented in each of the analysis-by-analysis inspections by the various groupings of station management position, station type, station power, and station purposes. The mean results indicate that station management positions, station

types, station power, and station purposes are predictors of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations as perceived by station directors. Within each grouping of station management position, station type, station power, and station purposes, selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, as perceived by station directors can be predicted.

The variables of station management position, station type, station power, and station purposes each provided a statistically significant difference within each grouping in regards to selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, as perceived by station directors. These findings were provided by employing a one-way ANOVA utilizing a Scheffé Multiple Comparison.

Use of the chi-square test showed that all purposes of radio stations correlate with alike station directors' perceptions of the college or university's purpose for their radio station. Observations were made highlighting differences within purposes of radio stations and station directors' perceptions of the college or university's purpose for their radio stations.

This study was launched with the potential of noncommercial radio stations being recognized by colleges and universities as academic training facilities, community service outlets, and most importantly, public relation arms for the schools. Of main concern within the study was the fact that, as Lucoff noted in 1979, while college and university administrators generally have little or no broadcasting experience, they possess control over the funding of campus radio stations (p. 26). This point was further illustrated by Robertson and Yokom's (1973) explanation that "in situations where the top decision makers and budget formulators [do] not, for whatever reasons, understand what radio might do to further the goals of their institutions, budgets [are] consistently low" (p. 111).

Havice, in a 1988 study of objectives for broadcast management curriculum, stated that the "task of preparing university students for careers in the telecommunications field means meeting expectations of students, parents, faculty, university administration and telecommunications professionals" (p. 34). To help achieve this goal, the student-operated radio station can be a valuable resource for broadcast education. Unfortunately, however, "in many cases, it has yet to reach its full potential for preparing students to become professionals" (Thompsen, 1992, p. 15).

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This study was based on the contention that part of the limitation contained within college and university noncommercial radio rests in a lack of adequate funding.

As mentioned before, while previous studies concerning funding have traditionally centered around the actual dollar amount, this study focused on investigation of the variables of station management positions, station types, station power, and perceptions of station purposes among radio station directors as possible significant predictors of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. Specifically, those selected factors were (a) integral part of an academic program, (b) public relations tool for the school, (c) serves the community, (d) alternative to commercial radio, (e) student training facility, (f) NPR affiliation, (g) serves the alumni, (h) student service, (i) viewed by the school as an important entity, (j) highly respected on campus, and (k) generates considerable support/underwriting.

Some studies concerning college and university radio have presented a thorough investigation and description of the state of noncommercial radio in higher education (Leidman, 1985). Approaches have also been taken to outline specific theories within college and university radio (Poole, 1989). And, as might be expected, much has been written concerning surveys undertaken to determine listener

interest and programming concerns at college and university radio stations (Rogers, 1991, p. 6). However, factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, the thrust of this study, have not been addressed in previous studies.

Noncommercial college and university radio stations normally operate as auxiliary enterprises in the sense that they are "service operations conducted to the benefit of students and faculty" (Ohio House, 1969, p. 57). Furthermore, these stations exist to provide a service to the community through their broadcasts. In contrast to typical auxiliary enterprises operated on college or university campuses, however, noncommercial radio stations normally do not charge a "fee directly related to, although not necessarily equal to, the costs of the goods or services" (Hughes, 1980, p. 96). The campus radio station is typically funded directly by the school, either through direct funding or some type of student service fee allocation. In this aspect as an auxiliary enterprise, then, the noncommercial college and university station is completely controlled and funded by the individual institution and thus, the station's continuance, "expansion or curtailment does not require state approval nor are state funds made available for these purposes" (Ohio House, 1969, p. 57). This study provided an analysis of selected factors

which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations within the context that a station's survival as an auxiliary enterprise rests upon its continued funding.

Another factor inherent to discussion of auxiliary enterprises is the idea that they "should contribute to and relate directly to the mission, goals, and objectives of a college or university" (Welzenbach, 1982, p. 198). This study was directed toward selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations with the intent that the station contributes to the objectives of the institution through academic programs, public relations efforts, student services, and student training. Also, the idea of providing a service to the community and alumni through an auxiliary unit (the campus radio station) was consider within the context of this study. Additionally, previous studies concerning auxiliary enterprises have provided a basis for how a noncommercial college or university radio station can be included as such an operating unit. However, no previous studies have highlighted the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations as an auxiliary enterprise.

"The traditional function of most campus radio stations has been to serve as a training ground for students who plan to enter professional broadcasting" (Smith, 1990, p. 17).

The findings of this study reinforced this contention by distinguishing the view of the radio station as a student training facility as one of the most important factors influencing the funding of stations. The findings of this study also indicated that service to the community is important. This ideal is consistent with the fact that colleges and universities are licensed to "operate broadcast facilities in the public interest, convenience, and necessity" (Ozier, 1978, p. 34).

The findings in this study help to define the role of station directors in formulating the objectives of radio stations. Thompsen suggested, in 1992, that "a faculty advisor can be a driving force in shaping a vision for the station, the reasons for its existence" (p. 14). Within this same arena, it is important to realize that many colleges and universities "continue to house their broadcast operation in an academic department, funded through academic channels, and operated in conjunction with academic rules, regulations, and priorities" (Ozier, 1978, p. 34). Here, then, it must be recognized that "financial resources and operating procedures are almost entirely determined by the academic missions of the department" (p. 34). This study was undertaken with the idea that most radio operations are contained within the academic setting. The findings of this study reflected the important association between academic

programs and the funding and purposes of college and university noncommercial radio.

In commenting on the role of the campus radio station concerning school public relations, Ozier (1978) pointed out that "the temptation to view and administer the broadcast operations as a public relations activity of the university is usually irresistible" (p. 35). The findings of this study revealed that station directors recognize the importance of this role in their acquisition of station funding.

Although the results of this research indicated that the factor of the station being an alternative to commercial radio is not a crucial element in influencing the funding of noncommercial college and university radio stations, it is still a valid area to be addressed. The concept of college radio as an alternative to commercial radio is fairly widespread; however, as Thompsen indicated in 1992,

> it can detract from the educational experience of students by encouraging them to focus on the sources of programming, rather than on the audiences for programming. . . . The philosophy is, by design, diametrically opposed to the prevalent philosophy of nearly every commercial radio (and television) station. (p. 13)

Finally, as this study addressed specifically the aspect of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, station administration and operation play an important role in

formulating the ongoing purposes of the station. Ozier (1978), in discussing the funding of stations, noted that "after structure and governance, financing for the university's broadcast operation is the second major area which should be examined" (p. 37). The findings of this study, then, help to examine the true purposes of stations in order to determine factors which influence funding.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Further Research

As stated earlier, previous studies concerning the funding of college and university noncommercial radio have traditionally centered around actual dollar amounts. This study, however, investigated the variables of station management positions, station types, station power, and station purposes among radio station directors as possible significant predictors of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. This study was undertaken recognizing the potential of college and university noncommercial radio stations as academic training facilities, community service outlets, and most importantly, public relation arms for the schools.

As this study was carried out through the responses of station directors and their interpretation of how station management positions, station types, station power, and

station purposes are significant predictors of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations, it is recommended that further research be directed toward the impressions of college and university administrators within this same subject area. Further research is also recommended which encompasses such aspects as student service fee allocation and budget decisions which affect college and university noncommercial radio station funding in this arena.

It is also recommended that research be undertaken to bring together previous research concepts, thus joining the aspects of actual funding amounts and factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. Such research would enable further ongoing investigation to provide true funding definitions, understandings, and concepts within college and university noncommercial radio.

Other research is recommended which involves the concept of investigating programming in relation to station purposes. This research would tie together station programming philosophies and fulfillment of station purposes through broadcast services.

Recommendations for Practice

In this study, the variables of station management positions, station types, station power, and station

purposes were examined as predictors of factors which influence the funding of college and university noncommercial radio stations. It is conceivable that these elements can be utilized in the true application of station funding processes. Therefore, the following recommendations are made for actual practice utilizing the implications of this study:

1. Application of the findings from this study should be utilized within funding proposals/applications to assist in formulating budget decisions for college and university radio stations.

2. The findings of this study should be utilized with regards to the consideration of (a) proposed stations, (b) continuation of stations, and (c) increase or decrease of station funding.

3. Direction and/or realignment of station purposes, as conceived by the station and the college or university, should be considered within the findings of this study.

Overall, utilization of the findings from this study can provide the impetus needed to examine the true purposes of planned and existing college and university noncommercial radio stations. Such use can provide the catalyst needed to fully utilize the valuable resources and services that these stations can possess and yield.

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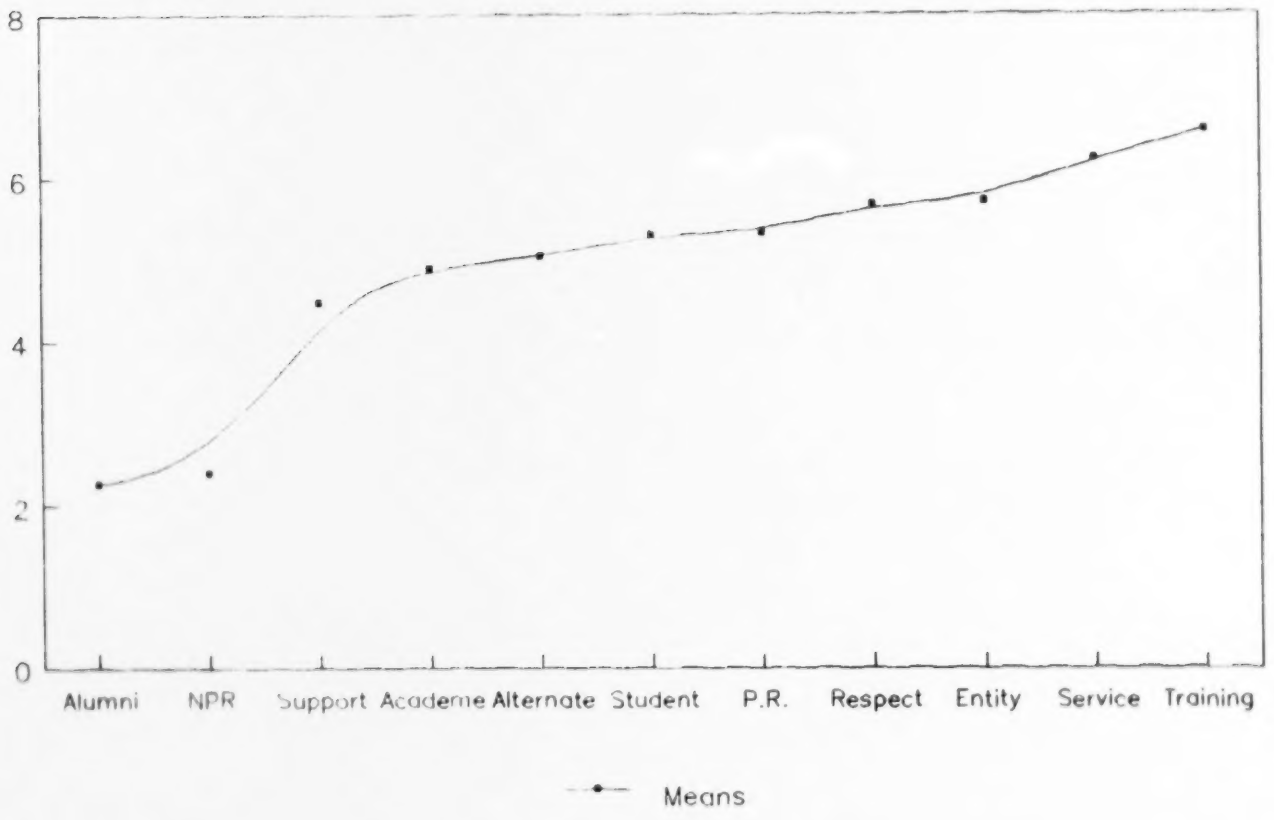
Figure 1

Funding Importance by Factors



n = 298

Figure 1

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